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Where Longevity Meets Provence

Coquillade Provence, France

Travelling into the heart of Provence wasn't on my 2025 bingo card, but I can say without hesitation it has set the bar incredibly high for future retreats. Among the rolling vineyards and lavender fields of the Luberon, Coquillade Provence has confidently set a new benchmark for destination wellness.

Upon arrival, I'm welcomed by Charlie Bouffieux, Head of Press and Marketing, who welcomes me with a warm, unhurried introduction to the property. Even under the cover of evening, the attention to detail is unmistakable. I sense I'm in for a real treat.

The surprise comes when Charlie unveils I'll be staying in the newly opened Luberon Suites. Named after nymphs—Cyrène, Ida, Elysia, Daphné and Cassiopée—each suite blends mythology with modern luxury. Inside, curated antiques from Isle-sur-la-Sorgue sit alongside bespoke artisan pieces from the owner's private collection, creating spaces that feel both intimate and homey.

Outside, a generous hydrotherapy bath is nestled into the timber decking, opening onto vineyards and rolling hills beyond. It's here, soaking in the warm water as dusk settles, that the essence of Coquillade reveals itself. Not simply a place to stay, but a complete immersion into Provence.

Dinner awaits at Les Vignes, where refined, garden-driven cuisine celebrates the region's natural abundance. Seasonal ingredients, many harvested just steps from the kitchen, are transformed into dishes that feel elegant yet comforting. By night's end, I fall asleep feeling more relaxed than I have in months.

In the morning, I head to breakfast before joining the group for yoga. Thankfully, it's a gentle yin practice. Slow, grounding, and easy to follow, even though the entire class is in French. The movements are designed to soften tension and draw energy toward the third eye, creating a beautiful sense of clarity to start the day.

By afternoon, we're off on an e-bike tour through the hilltop villages of Provence. The 20km ride feels so enjoyable with the support of the electric bikes, allowing us to take in the scenery rather than focus on the climb. We wind through charming towns, pass by truffle farms, and soak in the vast beauty of the French countryside.

I'm convinced there's nothing better for the soul than this blend of movement, nature, and fresh Provençal air.

That evening, I keep things light with a simple meal at the bar. Balanced out, of course, by the fact that I devoured an entire cheese board for lunch (worth every bite).

The next morning, before my treatment I take time to explore the 2,000m² spa. Moving through forest bathing, hot and cold therapy, ice fall, sauna, hammam, and sensory shower, I slowly work my way through the space. The Ice Fall quickly becomes a standout as it's easily the coldest shower I've ever experienced, yet so unbelievably refreshing. The sensory shower is another favourite, layering water, scent, light and shifting temperatures. It's the perfect preparation before I even step into the treatment room.

Today I'm booked in for the Letting Go Ritual. While not part of the Vitalité retreat launched by Coquillade Provence in 2025, I feel incredibly grateful to experience it as part of my time here. The 120-minute ritual begins with a full-body scrub and a calming lavender wrap, before transitioning into a full body massage. It feels less like a treatment and more like a complete energetic reset.

The first thing I notice is the music. As a lifelong cinema lover, I often recognise soundtracks instantly, so when I hear Hans Zimmer and the sweeping scores from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Dark Knight Trilogy*, and *Interstellar*, it feels like stepping into a soundscape that's been personalised to me.

The experience begins with a full-body scrub, and from the very first scent, I know I'm in for something special. At first, I assume the exfoliant is salt, but the grains feel finer. Later I learn it's made from apricot kernels harvested from the property's own farm. The therapist begins at my back, working methodically before guiding me onto my front, each movement intentional and paced. A hot towel wraps around my feet, which is a relaxing and clever technique to preventing me slipping on the floor before stepping into the shower.

Next comes the body wrap, the heart of the treatment. The moment I lie back down, I register the heat. The bed is draped with a large, heated blanket, and unlike wraps done in a steam room or a standard treatment



space, where cool air can creep in, this warmth sits right on the edge of “almost too hot.” It’s delicious. As the therapist applies the rich, buttery mud, I immediately notice how different it is from the thin, chalky formulas so often used in Australia (sorry but it’s true). This mud is lush and decadent, pre-warmed so that it melts into the skin on contact.

Once the mud is applied, I’m wrapped and cocooned in heat like a private sauna. Part weighted blanket, part heated embrace, it becomes one of the most enjoyable body wrap experiences I’ve ever had. I drift in and out of consciousness, suspended in stillness, until the therapist returns. Another hot towel stretches the feet and removes the mud, a gentle reawakening, before a second shower, my skin already feeling velvet soft and nourished.

The massage that follows is the final unravelling. Warm oil glides across my back, shoulders, and arms, with medium-to-firm pressure dissolving pockets of tension. My arms are stretched off the table and softly pulled toward the floor, releasing the upper body. My legs are lifted and lengthened, calves and thighs kneaded, ankles and feet treated with equal attention. Pressure points at the ribs and lower calves encourage muscular release.

When I turn over, the table reshapes to cradle my knees and lower back, inviting even deeper comfort. The front of the body receives the same thoughtful care: stomach (so often neglected), décolleté, shoulders, hands, and finally the neck and scalp - a blissful closing note.

By the end, my skin feels impossibly soft and my mind noticeably quieter. I sink into a lounge afterward, reflecting on the experience, struck by how exceptionally well they execute a body wrap. It’s not just a treatment - it’s a recalibration.

As an experience, it feels nothing short of alchemy. Beyond the treatments, the cuisine and the setting, what lingers most is the pace. There is no sense of urgency here, no tight schedules, no hurried transitions. Each moment, whether a yoga class, a lingering lunch or a two-hour spa ritual, is given the space it needs to breathe.

It is within this spaciousness that longevity truly takes hold. As time stretches and the nervous system softens, the body naturally shifts out of urgency and into repair. Breathing deepens, integration becomes possible, and you are gently guided back to yourself in a way that recalibrates both body and mind. 🍃

WRITTEN BY MANAGING EDITOR, STEPHANIE MCLEAN



The Art Of Retreat

In Conversation with CÉCILE GAILLARD, Spa Director at Coquillade Provence

Creating a genuinely five-star retreat requires far more than a beautiful setting and a polished program. It's the cohesion, the flow, the intention, the operational harmony, that transforms a retreat into something memorable. As Australian wellness properties continue to explore elevated, longevity-focused stays, Coquillade Provence stands as a blueprint for what excellence looks like when every detail is considered.

We sat down with Cécile Gaillard, Spa Director at Coquillade Provence, to understand how a retreat of this calibre comes to life: the planning, the expertise, and the lessons that might inspire operators back home.

A Multi-Expert Collaboration

Vitalité was conceived as a collaborative experience, shaped by four experts who each brought their own perspective, discipline and sensibility to the program. Rather than a singular vision, the retreat was created through the intersection of movement, nourishment, energy, landscape and care.

The retreat itself is shaped through a considered collaboration between four leaders, each bringing a distinct perspective to the experience. Frédérique Verley, former Beauty & Wellness Editor-in-Chief of Vogue France, lends an editorial eye and nuanced understanding of global wellbeing movements, infusing the program with a contemporary, elevated sensibility. Holistic therapist Charlene Muscat guides sound and energetic alignment, her work encouraging deep resonance and inner recalibration, while nutrition is curated by author and naturopath Sonja Kuikstra, grounding each day in restorative, evidence-informed nourishment. Anchoring it all is Spa Director Cécile Gaillard, a Luberon native and part of Coquillade's original opening team whose expertise in phytotherapy and ancestral Provençal healing traditions roots the retreat firmly in its landscape.

Cécile describes the design of the Vitalité retreat as a deeply collaborative process, shaped through ongoing exchange between the team. "We were constantly sharing ideas," she says. "The retreat became a dialogue rather than a fixed program." This openness allowed the experience to hold structure while remaining responsive and fluid.

One of the key insights, Cécile notes, was resisting the temptation to over-program. "You have to leave space," she explains. "A retreat needs room to breathe." That balance between programmed experiences and ease became central to the guest experience.

Where Nature Meets Science

As part of the retreat, guests were invited to curate their spa journey, selecting or upgrading treatments guided by individual needs and



intentions. The approach reflected Coquillade's belief that wellbeing is most effective when it is both personalised and considered.

The treatment menu brings together Tata Harper, Nescens and a locally crafted line from nearby Avignon—three philosophies united by results, yet distinct in their approach. Together, they mirror the retreat's balance of nature-led rituals and science-backed innovation.

"Some guests are drawn to the comfort and familiarity of natural formulations, while others seek the precision of science-led treatments," explains Cécile. "By offering both, we can support each guest in a way that feels aligned to their personal longevity journey."

This duality is intrinsic to the property itself: deep Provençal roots complemented by Swiss heritage and clinical influence. Throughout the retreat, guests experienced a curated selection of vinotherapy rituals, restorative massages and personalised facials, each designed to support deep restoration and long-term vitality.

Lessons for Australian Retreat Operators

Cécile highlights three key principles:

1. Prioritise rhythm over volume.

"A retreat is not a bootcamp. Guests need time to move, rest, integrate, and reconnect."

2. Think beyond the spa.

"A retreat is an ecosystem. Every team member must understand the intention."

3. Don't be afraid to collaborate.

"Working with specialists enriches the experience and brings new perspectives."

For Australian operators looking to elevate their wellness offering, Coquillade Provence offers a compelling reminder: luxury isn't about abundance but coherence, spaciousness, and a deep respect for how humans restore. 🌿